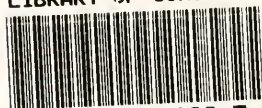


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BETWEEN THE LINES
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OSHKOSH, WISCONSIN

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A story based on the account given in Caesar's Gallic Wars of his contest with the Belgians.

“The Conspiracy”

Time—December 2-5, 63 B. C.

Place—Rome, Italy.

CHARACTERS

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO, Consul of Rome.

LUCIUS VALERIUS FLACCUS, Praetor of Rome.

LIVIA, Wife of Flaccus

LUCIUS, Little Son of Flaccus.

GAIUS POMPTINUS, Praetor of Rome.

Conspirators:

VOLTURCIUS

CETHEGUS

STATILIUS

LENTULUS

CEPARIUS

Two Allobroges, Ambassadors from Gaul, Senators, Armed Soldiers,
Heralds, Two Scribes, Slaves.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A dark, gloomy spot outside the walls of Rome. Two Allobroges in Gallic costume seen crossing the darkened stage. A man wrapped in a dark toga which covers his face, steps in front of the Allobroges.

One of the Allobroges: “Who art thou?”

Muffled figure: “That which thou didn’t not expect to find in Rome, a friend.”

Allobroge: “Ye Romans have called yourselves friends of my tribe ere this, but ye still grind us down by taxes and make us slaves.”

Muffled figure: “But these were the old Romans; the new Romans under the leadership of Catiline will treat ye well. Only give us the aid we ask, and ye shall have wealth and positions of power in the new city to be founded on the site of Rome.”

Allobroge: “On the site of Rome? What doest thou mean?”

Muffled figure: “Know ye not, ye men of Gaul, that this year is fated for the destruction of Rome? this year which is the twentieth since the burning of the capitol, moreover the tenth since the acquittal of the Vestal virgins? Do ye dwell so far from the course of the sun that ye know not in the Sibylline books ’tis stated the control of Rome will come to the third Cornelius, none other than Cornelius Lentulus, whom Catiline hath left as our leader in the city? Cornelius Cinna and Cornelius Sulla were before him. If ye aid us by furnishing cavalry forces with which to surround the city so that none may escape after we have set the city on fire and begun the slaughter of the citizens, ye shall find the Romans friends indeed.”

Allobroge: “Give us time to think it over.” Exit muffled figure.

Allobroges stand talking together.

First Allobroge: “I like not this plan. Though these Romans are our enemies, oppressors of our wives and children, this is such a crime as no barbarian hath ever devised against his race. What course shall we pursue?”

Second Allobroge: “Twere best, me think, to return to Rome, and report it unto our patron, Fabius Sanga.”

They start back in direction from which they came.

SCENE II.

House of Lucius Flaccus.

Lucius Flaccus sitting in a Roman chair reading a scroll. Livia, his wife, at further side of room playing with little Lucius. Enter a slave who hands Flaccus a scroll. Flaccus, reading it, quickly rises and addresses the slave.

Flaccus: "Order the litter, Marcipor."

The slave starts to go, Flaccus calls and stepping toward him, says in low voice: "Guard well thy mistress and little master till my return."

Slave: "Ay, domine."

Exit slave. Livia coming toward Flaccus.

Livia: Lucius, must thou go forth?"

Flaccus: "Ay, Livia. Cicero hath sent for me."

Slave returns. Flaccus embraces Livia and little Lucius, who has come running to his mother and is clinging to her skirts. They follow him to the door. Marcipor, the slave, remains standing a short distance behind Livia.

Curtain.

Slaves carrying Flaccus in a litter pass between the curtain and audience on way to Cicero's house.

SCENE III.

A room in Cicero's house. Cicero pacing up and down. Pomptinus resting on a couch. A slave opens door and admits Flaccus.

Cicero, advancing toward Flaccus: "Ah, Flaccus, I thought thou wouldst not arrive until the Greek Kalends."¹

Flaccus: "But, my dear Cicero, I have made all possible speed."

Cicero: "Indeed, that I know. 'Tis my impatience doth make the time seem long. But all is now well. The gods are on our side. At last I have the proof."

Pomptinus and Flaccus, together: "Of the conspiracy?"

Cicero: "Ay. Now all shall see clearly that a plot hath been formed against this most beautiful city of the world. Oh, ye immortal gods! to think that Romans, members of the toga wearing race, shouldst plot to slay their fellow citizens and burn even the temples of the gods!"

Flaccus: "Has thou written proof of this?"

Cicero: "'Tis within my reach. This night ye two praetors shall bring it back to me."

Flaccus: "Thou couldst assign me no work that would please me better."

Cicero: "I knew I could count on thy assistance, and thine also, my Pomptinus. Therefore I have outlined thy course of action."

He hands each a scroll. They rise, and depart. Cicero, head down, paces up and down.

Curtain.

¹ Never.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A lonely spot with bushes at both ends of stage. Soldiers seen lying down behind bushes. Pomptinus in charge of soldiers on one side, Flaccus on other side. Tramping of feet heard drawing nearer. Allobroges, with Volturcius and a number of Romans, enter. The soldiers rise stealthily and make attack on the Allobroges from back and front. At sign from praetors, the battle stops. Allobroges and Volturcius are searched. Four letters are taken from them. Allobroges and Volturcius are led back under arrest, soldiers on each side and behind them.

SCENE II.

Room in Temple of Concord. Senators seated opposite Cicero, who is in a curule chair behind a table. A tripod containing smoking incense stands back of him. A herald brings in Volturcius, who acts terrified.

Cicero: "Volturcius, by order of the senate, I promise thee the protection of the state if thou wilt tell all thou doest know regarding the plot of thy fellow conspirators."

Volturcius hesitates, then rising, says, glancing about in fear: "I was but carrying a letter from *Lentulus* to *Catiline*, bidding him use a garrison of slaves and march upon the city with his army so that when the city had been set on fire from all sides and an endless slaughter of citizens had been made, he might be at hand to intercept those who should attempt to flee and might join with the leaders of the conspiracy in the city." (Sits down.)

Herald leads in two *Allobroges*.

Cicero, to elder *Allobroge*: "Tell unto this body of Romans that which thou didst relate to thy patron, *Fabius Sanga*."

Elder Allobroge: "Most noble Senators, unto us by *Lentulus*, *Cethegus* and *Statilius*, there were given an oath and letters to the members of our tribe, bidding them send a cavalry into Italy as soon as possible, and assuring us that they themselves would furnish pedestrians forces. *Lentulus* also did urge us greatly to join with him, saying, according to the *Sibylline books* and the sooth sayers he is the third *Cornelius* to whom the control of this city is to come."

Cethegus is led in. Two slaves enter with their arms filled with swords and daggers, which they throw upon the table in front of *Cicero*.

Cicero to *Cethegus*: "*Cethegus*, upon the advice of these *Allobroges*, *Caius Sulpicius* hath searched thy house and brought hither these weapons. How camest thou with them? Canst thou explain?"

Cethegus: "They are but part of my collection. I have always been fond of good cutlery."

Cicero, holding a tablet toward *Cethegus*, and pointing to the seal: "Doeest thou recognize this seal?"

Cethegus nods.

Cicero, with a small dagger, cuts the string around the tablet, opens tablet and reads aloud: "To the Senate and people of the *Allobroges*. I will do those things which I have assured your ambassadors, and I beg of ye to carry out the directions which your ambassadors have received from me."

Cethegus slinks down in his chair and looks down guiltily.

Lentulus is led in.

Cicero, holding up a tablet: "Doeest thou, Oh, *Lentulus*, recognize this seal?"

Lentulus nods.

Cicero: "It is indeed a well-known seal, the likeness of thy grandfather, a most famous and patriotic man, and this seal, though speechless, ought to have recalled thee from so great a crime."

He cuts the string and reads the letter: "To the Senate and people of the *Allobroges*. See that ye do carry out the terms of your agreement."

Cicero: "Hast thou aught to say?"

Lentulus shakes his head negatively. Two scribes at table at right of *Cicero*, write busily. *Lentulus* suddenly rises, and turns to *Allobroges*, and says: "Men of Gaul, what have I ever had to do with ye? When did ye ever come to my house? And thou, *Volturcius*, when have I had speech with thee?" (Remains standing.)

Elder Allobroge, rising: "By *Publius Umbrenus*, a freedman, 'twas we first met *Gabinus Cimber*, who did escort us to thy house, where thou didst tell us thou wast destined by fate to rule this city. Didst thou not discuss this with us?"

Lentulus sits down in confusion.

Volturcius rises, says to *Cicero*: "I beg of thee, read the letter given me by *Lentulus* for *Catiline*."

Cicero picks it up and reads:

"Who I am, thou will know from this man whom I have sent to thee. See to it that thou art brave, and consider how far thou hast gone. Consider what is now necessary for thee, and add to thyself the aid of all, even of the slaves."

Gabinus is led in.

Cicero: "Gabinus, tell unto us thy share in this plot to destroy Rome."

Gabinus: "Destroy Rome? I know naught of such a plan."

Cicero: "Thy comrades here have all confessed to that which these Allobroges do testify. Didst thou not conduct these men to the house of Lentulus?"

Gabinus sees the Allobroges for the first time, and sits down in confusion.

While scribes write down testimony, the conspirators keep looking at each other stealthily. A Senator rises.

Senator: "I vote that these conspirators, all of whom have confessed, be led into custody."

Several Senators rise at once, and say: "Let it be decreed."

Guards enter, and as they approach Lentulus, he rises, throws toga from his shoulders onto a chair, saying: "I here abjure my office as praetor that ye may not pollute your hands in touching the sacred person of a magistrate."

Two guards lead him out. The other conspirators are led out.

Curtain.

SCENE III.

Two days later, December 5, 63 B. C.

Stage dimly lighted. Street leading to the prison. Cicero leads Lentulus across stage to a guard at prison door, by whom Lentulus is led into prison. Flaccus leads Cethegus, Pomptinus leads Gabinus, and other Romans lead Statilius and Ceparius to the prison. A crowd of Romans of all classes keeps collecting on stage. After all conspirators have been led into prison, Cicero comes to door, and raising his hand, says:

Cicero: "Fuerunt." "They are no more."

The crowd shouts and waves ends of togas, crying: "Pater tuae patriae."

Some light torches and follow Cicero across stage, shouting, "Pater tuae patriae."

Finis.

“Between the Lines of Cicero”

“Oh, mater, mater! They are burning the city.”

Livia clasped the frightened child in her arms, and turned inquiring eyes upon the slave who had followed his little charge into the peristylum (court).

“Nay, domina (mistress). He hath but seen the smoke rising from the temple of Vesta,” replied the slave.

“Ah, then, mi fili (my son), thou needst not fear,” said Livia. “Knowest thou not that that is the temple of the good goddess to whom thy father doth sacrifice each day?”

“But, mater, the crowds are so great, and they all talk and cry.”

Again Livia looked at the slave for information.

“Ay, domina. The streets are full of people. The Forum is crowded, and the steps of every temple are filled with people of all classes. To-day patricians, plebeians and slaves stand together and talk.”

“Of what do they talk, Marcipor?” asked Livia.

Before replying to her question, the aged slave motioned to her to send the child away.

“Run over to the fountain, Lucius, and feed thy swans,” Livia directed the child.

The little boy went over to the great marble fountain in the center of the peristylum and began throwing food to the pair of swans swimming gracefully in the large basin of the fountain.

“Now tell me all, Marcipor,” said Livia, turning again to the slave who, on account of his long, faithful service, was treated more like a friend than a slave by both Livia and her husband, Lucius Valerius Flaccus, at this time one of the praetors of Rome.

“Thou dost know, domina, ’tis now three days since Cicero, the consul, led into custody the followers of Catiline, that knave who seeketh the blood of every honest Roman. Their friends have formed a plot to release them and burn Rome. ’Tis this thou hearest spoken of on every side.”

“Ah, Marcipor! Then hath Catiline returned?”

“Nay, domina, but ’tis said he is on his way.”

“Oh, that Pompey and his legions were back from the East! Thinkest thou that Cicero can guard the city, Marcipor?” Then without waiting for an answer, she leaned toward him and whispered: “Is there danger from our slaves? Will they remain faithful?”

“I trust all but Medon, that young Greek whom the dominus (master) bought on the last Ides. He talks much with the other slaves when he thinks he is unobserved.”

Livia clasped her hands to her breast in terror.

“Nay, nay. Be not afraid,” the slave hastened to say, “for now that Cicero, in the name of the state, hath offered to every slave who doth give information of the conspiracy, 100,000 sesterces (\$5,000) and his freedom, none will dare revolt.”

“Thy words comfort me, Marcipor. But I wish thy master would return. ’Tis now nearly the tenth hour.”

The slave said nothing. He had told her but little of the tumult which had frightened the child when they were walking on the Palatine Hill on which the house of Flaccus was situated. Looking down from this height, he had seen the Forum packed with a mob, the murmur of whose voices sounded like the roll of distant thunder. All were looking toward the Capitoline Hill, where in the temple of Concord the senate was assembled, discussing the punishment to be meted out to the conspirators.

As Marcipor was passing the temple of Jupiter Stator, he was hailed by a slave belonging to Decimus Silanus, the consul-elect.

"Mad fellow, take not that child near yon rabble! Knowest thou not his father was one of the magistrates who helped to capture the conspirators, and now their friends lie in wait for the households of all those whom the gods have placed in power?"

"How then dost thou, Silanus' favorite slave, dare be abroad?"

The slave ignored the irony of Marcipor's reply.

"Thou'd best get thee home and bid thy fellows guard the house. 'Tis most sunset, by which time the senate must have passed its decree, if 'tis to be sanctioned by the gods. Me thinks, Marcipor, we shall see as bloody times as in the days of Sulla."

He hastened on to report to the wife of Silanus what he had learned regarding the doings of the senate.

The child had understood something of what the slave had said, and terrified by the size and actions of the crowds which thronged the narrow streets, he begged to be taken home. As Marcipor followed him into the house, he gave the slave who stood at the door a signal meaning "danger," and then proceeded into the peristylum to his mistress, knowing well that the door-keeper would immediately see that the house was guarded more carefully. Marcipor himself was resolved not to leave Livia until Flaccus should return.

Now he stood leaning against a pillar not far from the marble seat on which Livia was sitting. He saw her absent-mindedly kiss little Lucius good night when his nurse came to lead him away to bed. The twilight deepened. The shadows cast by the pillars supporting the roof of the peristylum grew longer and darker. The wind coming down the impluvium (opening in the roof) was chill, but Marcipor thought "better the domina should remain in this part of the house, where only the soft splashing of the water in the fountain was audible, than that she should go to the atrium (living room), from which the shouting of the mob as it passed the house could be heard." Even from here the uproar was quite distinct to the listening slave, whose hearing was quickened by his anxiety. The senate had been dismissed, and a crowd had evidently escorted Cicero to his home on the slope of the Palatine Hill toward the Forum. But what was the cause of the shouting? The slave scarcely dared to think.

Soon sounds from the front of the house told that Flaccus had arrived. The noise aroused Livia from her reverie, and rising, she hurried through the fauces (passage ways) into the atrium, closely followed by her faithful guard.

"Ah, Livia, mea amata (my loved one)," said Flaccus, clasping her in his arms.

"Lucius, Lucius, why art thou so late?"

"Ah, Livia! Let us rather thank the gods that I am here than blame them because I am late."

"Hast thou been in danger?" she asked quickly.

He kissed her passionately. "What Roman is there who has not been in danger during the consulship of Cicero and Antonius? (63 B. C.) Nay, since the consulship of Cotta and Torquatus? (65 B. C.) But it is all over now, amata, and tomorrow thou shalt go with me to offer sacrifices at the shrines of all the gods."

Turning to the slave, he said: "Wilt thou o'ersee the guard tonight, Marcipor? At the third watch Zoninus will relieve thee."

The slave nodded and left the room.

"Why, if the danger is over, doest thou place guards, Lucius?" asked Livia.

"Ah, Livia, we must not take the help of the gods so for granted, lest they be displeased. Sit thee down on this couch that I may feel thee near," he continued, leading the way to a couch spread with costly hangings.

"How fares little Lucius?" he asked, when they were seated.

"Well, but he asks for thee constantly."

"Indeed! That doth please me much. I would not like that he should forget me when I am from home. Livia, Livia! what days these have been!"

"Poor Lucius. Thou must be weary."

"Yea. But had Hercules himself been in Rome at this time he would have been the same. 'Tis for Cicero I fear. He hath far o'ertaxed himself."

"Tell me all thou hast done these last four days, for I have heard naught from thee since thou didst hurry away at the summons of Cicero."

"To think that that was but four days ago! When I reached the house of Cicero, a slave escorted me into the atrium, where Cicero and Pomptinus were awaiting me."

"Ah, Flaccus," said Cicero, 'I thought thou wouldst not arrive until the Greek Kalends (never).'

"But, my dear Cicero, I have made all speed," I replied.

"Indeed, that I know. 'Tis my impatience doth make the time seem long. But all is now well. The gods are on our side. At last I have the proof."

"Of the conspiracy?" asked Pomptinus and I in the same breath.

"Ay. Now all shall see clearly that a plot has been formed against this most beautiful city of the world. Oh, ye immortal gods! To think that Romans, members of the toga wearing race, should plot to slay their fellow citizens and burn even the temples of the gods."

"Hast thou written proof of this?"

"'Tis within my reach. This night ye two praetors shall bring it back to me."

"He stopped his pacing up and down the atrium and stood between us.

"Fabius Sanga will be here presently and then ye shall hear my plan. Ah, he is already arrived," he continued, as a slave ushered Sanga into the room.

"Salve, Sanga (hail). Hast thou good news? Do the Allobroges agree?"

"Yea," Sanga replied, 'but only after much persuasion. They judge us all by the governor whom Rome hath placed over them.'

"Relate to Pomptinus and Flaccus what thou didn't tell to me."

"Sanga complied with his request.

"Early this morning there came to my house, two members of the race of the Allobroges, a Gallic tribe, whose patron I am. Both were much excited. The elder, acting as spokesman, said, 'Thou doest know, Oh, Sanga, that we came to Rome some days ago to seek redress from the senate for the grievous oppression of our tribe by our Roman governor. Our request was without avail, and last night, during the second watch, we were leaving the city on our way back to Gaul, when, as we neared the darkest quarters of the Subura, a man clad in a dark toga, which was closely drawn over his face, stepped in our way.'

"Who art thou?" I asked

"That which thou didn't not expect to find in Rome, a friend," he replied.

"Ye Romans have called yourselves friends of my tribe ere this, but ye still grind us down by taxes and make us slaves," I returned.

"But these were the old Romans; the new Romans, under the leadership of Catiline, will treat ye well. Only give us the aid we ask, and ye shall have wealth and positions of power in the new city to be founded on the site of Rome."

"On the site of Rome? What doest thou mean?"

"Know ye not, ye men of Gaul, that this year is fated for the destruction of Rome? This year which is the twentieth since the burning of the capital, moreover the tenth since the acquittal of the Vestal Virgins? Do ye dwell so far from the course of the sun that ye know not in the Sibylline

books 'tis stated the control of Rome will come to the third Cornelius, none other than Cornelius Lentulus, whom Catiline hath left as our leader in the city? Cornelius Cinna and Cornelius Sulla were before him. If ye aid us by furnishing cavalry forces with which to surround the city so that none may escape after we have set the city on fire and begun the slaughter of the citizens, ye shall find the Romans friends indeed.'

"Give us time to think it over.'

"After giving him this reply, O Sanga, we turned back, and have come to thee. Though these Romans are our enemies, oppressors of our wives and children, we like not this crime which has been planned, such a crime as no barbarian has ever devised against his race. What course shall we pursue?"

"Leaving them at my house, I came and reported the matter to our consul, Cicero, who hath arranged for them to pretend to join the conspiracy, but to ask for letters to their tribe and to Catiline, whom, as they return to Gaul, they have agreed to visit at his camp in Northern Italy. 'Tis these letters Cicero wishes ye to obtain. He hath laid a careful plot for ye to take them from the Allobroges by show of force so that they may not be charged with treachery by the conspirators and thus bring disaster upon their tribe.'

"After Sanga finished speaking, Cicero gave us a few instructions and toward dusk Pomptinus and I left the city with an armed force, each by a different route in order to avoid arousing suspicion. We reached the Mulvian Bridge which, thou knowest, is about three miles north of Rome. Here we hid in the villas at each end of the bridge, Pomptinus in the villa on the farther side from Rome, I on the side toward the city. Concealed in the bushes, our helmets and swords covered so that they might not gleam in the moonlight, we lay waiting till the Allobroges should enter upon the bridge. 'Twas after the beginning of the third watch before the steady tramp, tramp of their feet told us the moment had arrived. Then, when they reached the center of the bridge over the Tiber, we attacked them from both sides; the Allobroges, at first taking us for enemies, fought furiously, then at a signal from us, they understood and surrendered. Quickly surrounding them, our soldiers searched them and handed over to us the letters with seals unbroken.

"In the early dawn we led our prisoners back to Rome, and to the house of Cicero, who at once dismissed heralds to summon the senate in the temple of Concord. To the conspirators, also, summons were sent, and they came, suspecting nothing.

"When all was ready for the trial, Volturcius, a conspirator who had been arrested with the Allobroges whom he was accompanying that he might lead them to Catiline, was brought in and promised by Cicero the protection of the state if he would reveal all he knew of the plots against Rome. Trembling with fear, he testified that he had a letter from Lentulus for Catiline, bidding him enlist the help of the slaves, and march down upon Rome with an army, which was to be stationed at the city gates, to cut down with swords all who should attempt to flee when the conspirators within the city should set it on fire and begin an endless slaughter of the citizens. After Volturcius had testified, the Allobroges were brought in and made similar statements. Then Cicero sent for Cethegus, another of the conspirators, and holding up before him his letter which we had taken from the Gauls, he asked if he recognized his seal.' After he had acknowledged it, Cicero cut the string binding the letter and read it aloud. It proved what the Allobroges and Volturcius had said, and Cethegus hung his head in shame.

"One by one the conspirators were led into the room and were shown their letters by Cicero. All acknowledged their guilt, and as they sat there before the senate with heads bowed, gazing at the ground and looking stealthily at one another from time to time, they seemed no longer to be judged by others, but to judge themselves.

(¹ Roman letters were bound by a string on which wax was dropped and stamped with the family seal.)

"When the trial was ended, they were led under guard from the temple to the homes of prominent Romans to wait until their punishment should be decided upon. The trial had lasted from early morning until dusk, but the Forum was still packed with people, anxiously awaiting news of the senate's actions. Tired though he was, Cicero ascended the rostra and told them how the proof of the conspiracy had been obtained, and described the trial. Then, urging them, after worshipping at the shrines of the gods, to go home and guard their houses as they had done the night before, he turned to leave the rostra, when the crowd, waving the ends of their togas, burst into a shout, hailing Cicero as the father of his country. His tired face lighted up when he heard them, and he looked as happy as a god when they escorted him to his home, carrying torches and shouting 'Pater tuae patriae.' (Father of your country.)

"But could that crowd from whose throats he has warded off the bloody daggers have seen him in the senate this morning, they would have loved him even more. A hurried meeting of the senate had been called because 'twas learned the friends of the conspirators were planning their release and the complete destruction of Rome. Decimus Silanus, consul-elect, was first to state his opinion, and argued for the death penalty. All agreed till it came Julius Caesar's turn to speak.

"He voted to condemn them to everlasting chains, as death was not decreed by the gods for punishment. His eloquence, combined with the senators' fear for Cicero's life, should he have Roman citizens slain without consent of the people, changed the attitude of the entire senate. Cicero perceived by their looks and whispers what was in their minds, and rising, he exclaimed, 'By the immortal gods! Cease to think of me and to spare me. Plan for yourselves, your wives and your children.'

"Then he reviewed the base deeds of the conspirators, the dangers under which we have lived and which we have escaped only by the intervention of the gods themselves. But his words only attached them to him the more. 'Twas not till Cato rose and in an eloquent speech swept away their objections, that the vote for the death penalty was cast. Then at dusk we set forth from the temple of Concord, where the meeting had been held, and went toward the prison with the condemned conspirators, Cicero himself leading Lentulus.

"A guard placed a rope around their necks, and one by one they were lowered into the dungeon beneath the prison and strangled. Cicero went to the door and, raising his hand, said to the waiting multitude, 'Fuerunt.' (They are no more.)

"For a moment the mob stood silent; then some began to depart. Others crowded around Cicero and escorted him home, shouting and pouring out praises to him and to the gods. 'Twas thus I left him at his house, the idol of his country. Antonius is already leading an army toward the north to meet with Catiline, and soon Rome will again be at peace."

Flaccus ceased speaking. After a moment Livia spoke as though to herself:

"And so they are slain, Gabinius, Cethegus, Statilius, Caeparius, and Lentulus. All once our friends. Oh, Lucius!"

"Av, Livia. But 'twas better that five should be slain than that all of us should perish."

They sat in silence while without in the darkness the slaves stood on guard.

“Of all These the Belgians were the Bravest”

The old Roman sat before the family altar with his head bowed. The light from the altar fires fell on his strong, care-lined face. He seemed unconscious of the slave who crept silently about the room, lighting with a torch the bronze lamps hanging from the ceiling.

The boy at his knee was also unobserved until the latter gently plucked at his grandfather's tunic. Then putting his arm about the boy's shoulders, the old man murmured:

“To think I shall see the son of my son made a citizen of Rome. Ah, little Marcus, tomorrow will be a proud day for thy old grandfather.”

“Oh, but, grandfather, I do not wish to be a man. I do not want to put on the toga virilis (man's toga). Caius, my friend, did not put it on till he was sixteen, and I am but fifteen.”

“But, *mi puer* (my boy), when thy friend put on the toga, the great Caesar was living. Now that he has been slain, we know not what may happen. Rome has need of all her men. O ye immortal gods! To think I should live to see great Caesar slain! My imperator!”

“Tell me about this Caesar, grandfather. Why do some love him, and others curse him even before the gods? Tell me another story before my father comes to take the bulla from my neck and hang it up to the gods.”

“How my little Marcus dreads giving up his boyhood!”

The old man's features softened as he looked at the child's anxious face. Then extending his hands toward the images of the Penates on the altar, he exclaimed:

“Oh, ye gods who preside over my household, grant that this boy may ne'er be placed in such peril that the bulla which is to be taken from his neck to-night and dedicated to ye, may needs be removed from above yon altar and placed again about his neck for his protection.”

Turning to the boy, he laid his hand on his head.

“Had this Caesar's enemies known him as I knew him, nay, as all the tenth legion knew him, he would not lie to-night pierced by their daggers, and the mob which thou doest hear shouting in the streets of Rome, would be beside their peaceful hearths. Thou needest not fear,” he added, as the sound of the tumult without grew louder. “Thy father is directing the slaves who are guarding the house. I, too, would be on guard but for wounds received while fighting in Caesar's army in Northern Gaul.”

The mob passed on, and as the sound of the shouting was lessened by the distance, the child loosened his terrified hold on his grandfather's arm.

“Tell me about that battle, grandfather.”

The old man began more as though talking to himself than to the child.

“It was the year that Cornelius Lentulus and Caecilius Metellus were consuls. (57 B. C.) We had fought two great wars the preceding year, one with the Helvetians, the other with Ariovistus, the king of the Germans. Worn out by the latter campaign, we left Gaul and went down with Caesar into Northern Italy to spend the winter. While we were there, frequent messages came from Rome, telling Caesar how Pompey was turning the people against him; and equally disturbing news was sent him by Labienus, a lieutenant whom Caesar had left in charge of the army's winter quarters in Central Gaul. At last, toward spring, the letters of Labienus became more urgent. They informed Caesar that the Belgians, 430,000 strong, were massing against the Romans, resolved to drive Caesar and the Roman army forever from Gaul. Then he took quick action. Well do I remember that day. A horseman came riding from the North about the eleventh hour, and shortly after he left Caesar's tent, the deep tones of the trumpet rang through the camp. Instantly the soldiers massed in the Praetorium.

“‘What news?’ I asked of Titus Volturcius, whose tent was nearest the general's.

“‘I judge we are about to begin another campaign, for the red banner is displayed before Caesar's tent,’ he replied.

"Caesar soon appeared, already wearing his red sagum (military cloak).

"'Fellow soldiers,' he said, 'in the third watch of the night we again set forth for the North. Let each man carry for himself ground grain for fifteen days. Our allies will furnish us with supplies on the march, and already there is fodder in the fields. Do you but show that courage which won the victories over the Helvetians and Ariovistus, and Gaul is ours.'

"Hastily the men started for their tents, where each collected his baggage into a pack. By the third watch we all were ready; our helmets hanging about our necks, swords girt at our sides, and each carrying a javelin in his right hand, while we bore our packs over our left shoulders. The bright moonlight aided us in following the cavalry, which, as usual, led the line of march; the long baggage train brought up the rear.

"As I was one of his body guard, I rode by Caesar that night. He seemed more worried than usual. His great white horse seemed to feel that something was wrong, and kept turning his head around. Caesar leaned over and patted the animal as though to reassure it. At last, as we reached a height, he drew rein, and we waited there, looking down at the long winding line of soldiers coming up behind us, some on foot, some on horseback, the moonlight reflecting from their shields and javelin points. The sound of the tramping feet and the rumble of the baggage wagons rolled through the hills.

"'Ah, Marcus! How many of these men have daughters, too! And how many will never see them more! Oh, ye gods of war! How much ye ask of men!' he said to me.

"He rode on, a little in advance, his head bowed in thought. After awhile he drew rein till I came up to him, and as though ashamed of his show of feeling, said:

"'All is not well with Julia. Pompey, my son-in-law, cannot forget that she is Caesar's daughter.'

"We rode in silence the rest of the night, and never did a night seem so long as that, while we followed winding forest paths and went past Gallic villages which were scarcely visible in the moonlight. It was early morning before we reached the territory of our allies, where we dared rest a few hours. For several days and nights we proceeded in this way, resting only when forced by weariness.

"At last we came in sight of the hill where the forces of the Belgians lay, and Caesar decided to pitch his camp on the hill opposite them. The Sabis river (Sambre) flowed between the two hills, which were of equal height. The one which the enemy held was cleared at the base for about two hundred paces, and a dense wood covered its crest. Here in hiding lay the Belgians; down on the bank of the river a few pickets of their cavalry were stationed.

"Our own cavalry, crossing the river, which was about three feet deep, drove these pickets up the hill to the edge of the forest. The moment that the first line of our six legions, who were but a short distance behind those of us who formed the body guard, reached the summit of our hill, and began fortifying the camp, the enemy rushed forth from the forest, routed our cavalry, and crossing the river, hastened up our hill to the men who were scattered in the work of fortifying. With shouts of triumph they came toward us.

"But they had not counted on Caesar. At a command from him, the trumpeter blew the signal to form in line of battle, messengers dashed off to call those who had gone some distance to get materials for the camp wall, and by the time the enemy were within a javelin's throw (75 feet) of us, we were drawn up in battle array.

"Caesar had ordered the body guard to draw up with the tenth legion on the left side of the Roman camp. Next to us was the ninth legion. We all stood holding our javelins above our heads, waiting eagerly for the trumpeter to give the signal. When its clear tones rang out, the air was black with our weapons as we charged. The Atrebatas, for that tribe of the Belgians had advanced against us, turned and fled down the hill and

plunged into the river. We followed, lashing them with our swords. On the opposite hill they turned and renewed the battle, but we routed them and gained possession of their camp.

"Looking back from this height we saw our own camp was unprotected in the front as well as on the left side, where we had been drawn up. For the eleventh and eighth legions, which had been stationed in front of the camp, were fighting hand to hand with the Viromandui, another Belgian tribe, on the very banks of the river.

"Up the hill toward the right side of the Roman camp, we saw the Nervii hastening against the twelfth and seventh legions, which were crowded so closely together that they could not use their weapons. When they reached the top of the hill, the Nervii divided, part of the forces going around to the rear to seize the Roman camp, part surrounding the legions.

"Then Labienus, commander of the tenth legion, seeing the danger of the camp, shouted to us: 'Milites (soldiers), ye see in how great peril our legions, camp and imperator are. Haste ye to their aid.'

"The trumpet blew, and worn though we were, down the hill, through the river, and up the opposite height we rushed, willing to give our lives for our loved imperator. But as we reached the farther bank, we saw him gallop past the front of the camp toward the twelfth legion. Seizing a shield from one of the soldiers in the rear line because he had come there without a shield, he called the centurions by name, and shouting, 'Fellow soldiers, advance! Relax the maniples so that ye may use your swords more easily,' he dashed into the front line.

"The enemy, who in great numbers had been rushing up the hill, were retarded, and when we reached the scene even those of the Romans who, overcome by wounds, had lain down, rising, supporting themselves with their shields, fought like true soldiers of Rome.

"But the enemy! Ah, how they fought! When we cut down their lines, those nearest stood on the bodies of the slain, and when they in turn were cut down, their bodies were heaped together and the next line stood upon them and fought as though from a hillock. At last the battle was over, and at dusk the old men of the tribe of the Nervii came from the swamp where, before the battle, they with the women and children had been placed, out of the reach of our army. Advancing with humble air, these aged Belgians knelt at Caesar's feet and begged for peace. The eldest acted as spokesman.

"'Mighty Caesar, sent by the survivors of our tribe, which has been reduced almost to destruction, we come to sue for peace. We have been reduced from six hundred to three senators, from sixty thousand men to barely five hundred who can bear arms. Have compassion on our race, and receive us under thy protection.'

"Never shall I forget the joy on that aged face when Caesar said:

"'Go back to thy people, and tell them Caesar bids them return to their homes, use their own fields and towns, and that he will protect them from all harm.'

"The suppliants departed, and we settled down for the night in our camp. Caesar, though worn by the exertions of the day, visited each one of us who had been wounded. Far into the night I saw him from where I lay at my tent door. Toward the third watch of the night, as he was coming back toward his tent, I saw him stop and listen near the captives' quarters, not far from my tent. Then he went nearer and spoke to some one. I raised up on my elbow, and saw him stoop over and lift up a young boy. The night was still and I heard him distinctly, as he said:

"'Who art thou, boy?'

"'Boduognatus, son of Boduognatus, leader of the Nervii. Oh, imperator, let me go! Let me return to my people before they slay me!'

"'None will harm thee. I have given pardon to thy tribe, and tomorrow thou shalt have thy liberty.'

"'But thy soldiers, they are casting lots to see who shall slay me.'

"'What?'

"Caesar's voice showed his surprise. But the boy evidently saw nothing to fear in the care-lined face bent over him, for he poured out his story.

"When they searched me, they found in the boss of my shield a letter from Pompey to Servius Galba, one of thy soldiers, offering him great rewards if he would slay thee, mighty Caesar. 'Twas for this I let myself be captured, to give the letter to Galba.'

"Did thy father know?"

"Nay, nay. Spare my father! By the gods, I swear he knew naught of it."

"Then didn't *thou* hate me?"

"The kind voice sounded more gentle.

"The boy stammered, 'But I did not know thee. They said thou would'st oppress us all and make us slaves.'

"No. Thou didst not know me,' Caesar said, and never have I heard his voice more sad.

"Come. I will go with thee part way to thy father's camp."

"I leaned out of the tent as far as I could, and saw the mighty Caesar, this man whose enemies say he was cruel and ambitious, gently lead the boy past the guard and out of the camp."

The old man stopped. He seemed not to hear the shouting of the mob, which was again rushing past the house, crying: "Death to tyrants," "Down with tyranny." His thoughts were with his loved imperator, the gentle Caesar, as those who knew him best had always found him.

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